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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT,
MONDAY, MARCH 29, 2004

THIS REPORT WILL PRESENT A TURKISH PRESS SUMMARY UNDER
THREE THEMES:

HEADLINES
BRIEFING
EDITORIAL OPINION

HEADLINES

MASS APPEAL
AKP gets 57 provinces - Hurriyet
AKP's second election victory - Turkiye
AKP takes CHP strongholds - Milliyet
Baykal suffers heavy defeat - Sabah
CHP strongholds fall, Baykal silent - Sabah
PM Erdogan: The Nation has voted for stability - Turkiye
Erdogan, Gul to send 'SOS' to Washington on Cyprus -
Milliyet
Rantisi: Bush an enemy of God, Islam - Aksam
Bribery charges threaten Sharon - Hurriyet

OPINION MAKERS
Turkey pulls to the right - Radikal
Government renews confidence, opposition sinks - Zaman
Nation gives AKP vote of confidence - Yeni Safak
CHP collapses - Yeni Safak
Critical three days in Switzerland - Radikal
Historic expansion in NATO - Cumhuriyet
Richard Clarke strikes at confidence in Bush - Cumhuriyet
Bribery causes deep trouble for Sharon - Radikal
Hamas, Hizbullah declare solidarity - Yeni Safak

BRIEFING

AK Party triumphs in municipal elections: In local elections on Sunday, the ruling AK Party increased its votes by 10 percentage points over the general elections in 2002, winning mayoral races in 57 provincial capitals. The AK Party easily won mayoral races in Ankara and Istanbul, but failed to oust the CHP in Izmir. Early, unofficial results showed the Justice and Development Party (AKP) winning 42.2 percent of the municipal vote, far ahead of its nearest rival, CHP, which was projected to win 21.4 percent. "Radikal" concludes that Turkey's political left continues to weaken, as the political center of gravity shifts rightward. CHP leader Baykal is expected to face pressure to give up the party leadership after the poll results produced disappointment at party headquarters. Some 30 CHP lawmakers are expected to submit a petition to Baykal on Tuesday urging him to step down. The extreme rightist Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and center-right True Path Party (DYP) recovered some of their voting base from Cem Uzan's Youth Party (GP). Uzan's GP lost almost all of the 7.2 percent of the vote it won in the 2002 elections, finishing the night with just 2.6 percent of the municipal vote. The Social Democratic People's Party (SHP) benefited from an election alliance with pro-Kurdish DEHAP party to win five provinces in southeast Turkey. However, the 'Democratic Unity' movement of the two parties won just 4.7 percent of the vote, a significant decline from 2002, when DEHAP won 6.2 percent of the national vote by itself. The AKP grabbed four of the seven municipalities in the southeast that were previously held by DEHAP. "Vatan" speculates that while Turkish nationalism remains strong, Kurdish nationalism is weakening. Observers predict that the divide in DEHAP will grow. The results on Sunday are expected to strengthen PM Erdogan's position in meetings with other officials during the UN-backed Cyprus peace talks set to take place Monday in Switzerland.

Cyprus: UN Secretary General Kofi Annan is expected to submit a fourth plan for resolving the Cyprus issue to the Turkish and Greek prime ministers in Burgenstock, Switzerland on Monday. The plan reportedly includes amendments intended to satisfy the concerns of both sides. Papers say that the Turkish Cypriots want Turkey's guarantor country status to be continued, and want to preserve a separate parliament, government and court system. The Turkish Cypriots have also insisted that fewer Greek Cypriots be allowed to move to the north, and have shown a willingness to cede some territory to achieve this goal. Cyprus negotiators from the US and Britain attended the four-way talks in Switzerland on Saturday. Concerned by Greek moves to stall the talks, FM Gul phoned Secretary of State Powell Saturday evening to urge greater US support for some of Turkey's 'crucial' demands. Powell promised Gul to discuss the issue with EU foreign ministers at meetings in Berlin and Brussels. PM Erdogan has been told in bilateral meetings with EU officials that it will not be possible to make the Cyprus agreement part of EU primary law, according to EU diplomatic sources. The Turks have signaled that the scheduled April 20 referendum in Turkish Cyprus could be canceled if the EU does not provide sufficient guarantees on this point.

"Powell letter brought four convictions": Four policemen blamed for killing a university student, Birtan Altinbas, while he was in police custody in 1991 were convicted by a Turkish court on Friday and sentenced to 4.5 years in prison. "Hurriyet" writes under a banner headline that 'the Powell letter brought four convictions.' The paper was referring to the fact that Secretary Powell raised the Altinbas case in a letter to FM Gul in late February. Powell urged that the case be resolved before the statute of limitations expired.

EDITORIAL OPINION: Elections in Turkey/US-Turkey Relations

"US views on a new period in Turkey" Yasemin Congar wrote from Washington in the mass appeal Milliyet (3/29): "Washington considers the March 29 date [the day after Turkey's local elections] as the beginning of a new period. This is because the ruling AKP has emerged with a resounding victory, far outdistancing its rivals on both the left and the right. US observers expect that the AKP will become more energetic and more courageous in the wake of the election results. It remains to be seen when and where this energy will be exercised. A US diplomat speaking right before the elections sketched out an ideal scenario for Turkey and Turkey's ruling party. The scenario keeps the focus on Turkey's EU prospects and more decisive, concrete steps toward Turkey's full accession to the EU. In sum, Washington's expectation about Turkey after the local elections is very much indexed to Brussels."

"Reflecting on the elections" Asli Aydinasbas wrote from Washington in the mass appeal Sabah (3/29): "Washington is preoccupied with the ongoing Cyprus negotiations more than with the AKP victory in Turkey's local elections. The US has been following every minute of the Cyprus negotiations and has been even more involved in the process through a recent phone call from the Turkish FM to Secretary Powell. . The election results did not bring any surprise for the Washington administration. However, the US believes that a political opposition has an important role to play in any democracy. The US administration thinks that a single-power authority without an effective opposition makes for an unhealthy democracy. This same argument applies to Turkey. . In any case, nobody in Washington is upset about the opposition CHP's poor showing in the election. The general observation about CHP is that it has persisted in its anti-American rhetoric and shown an inability to establish a constructive opposition that addresses the country's fundamental issues." EDELMAN